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Rainy weather will replenish lake levels

By SCOTT AIKEN / H-P Staff Writer

ST. JOSEPH - This year's cool, wet spring has a lot of beachgoers and boaters wondering when they'll get a chance to play.

But the long stretch of rainy weather hindering recreation is just what's needed to stop the fall of water levels on the Great Lakes, an Army Corps of Engineers official said

Earlier this year, the level on Lake Michigan and Lake Huron was near a record low. Rivers that feed the lakes have been down too, affected by dry years that depleted groundwater.

The situation may be changing, however, improved by May rainfall that was 154 percent above average over the area that empties into the two lakes.

"All the heavy rain we had over the last couple months certainly helped," said Adam Fox, hydrologist for the Army Corps of Engineers at the Detroit District office.

The extra rainfall will not immediately affect the levels of the Great Lakes, among the world's largest bodies of fresh water.

"It's a good start," said Fox. "And we're seeing a nice foundation for recharging the water table and taking the first step for bringing the lake levels around."

Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, on the same level, remain 22 inches below the long-term average for May, and two inches below this time last year.

But the heavy spring rain helped stop the levels from falling beyond the record low set in 1964. Lake Michigan this week is 12 inches above the all-time low for June.

During May, rainfall over the Lake Michigan-Lake Huron basin averaged 4.59 inches, or 1.61 inches above the average of 2.98 inches for the month.

A lot of the rain is soaking into the ground, replenishing groundwater that supplies streams.

"What that is doing is showing us how inherently dry ground conditions were," Fox said.

Even with the large amount of

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